

Section 200.6

Type 6 Industrial Waterfronts and Commercial Navigation Channels

A. Definition

These water areas are extensively altered in order to accommodate commercial and industrial water-dependent and water-enhanced activities. They include all or portions of the following areas:

- (1) Port of Providence
- (2) Tiverton shipping area
- (3) Quonset Point and Davisville
- (4) Coddington Cove
- (5) Melville
- (6) Galilee and Jerusalem
- (7) Westerly waterfront

B. Findings

1. The Port of Providence extends some ten miles along the Providence and East Providence shores of the Providence River and is the state's principal general cargo and petroleum port. Import and export of products moving through the port have a major impact on the state's economy and generate jobs and economic activity in many other sectors. In fiscal 1981, 5.3 million tons of petroleum, steel, cement, automobiles, lumber, scrap metal, and other non-petroleum commodities were received or shipped. The Providence shipping channel is dredged to an authorized depth of 40 feet. Large segments of shoreline and water in the port area are in derelict condition and littered with abandoned piers and sunken barges. Efforts to expand and improve the port have been underway for many years. In East Providence, across the channel from the Providence municipal wharf, the Providence and Worcester Railroad Company has made large investments in a major new landing pier. On the Providence side, infusions of public funds have brought many improvements, but much remains to be done. Priority problems include the difficulty in finding acceptable sites for dredged materials produced by maintaining or improving existing channels and berths, and the need to remove some 26,000 cubic yards of debris that forestalls the reuse of presently derelict areas. Coordinated planning and development efforts are essential to any initiative to improve the port and make it more competitive.

2. In the 1970s large-scale port facilities and waterfront industrial sites at Quonset-Davisville, Coddington Cove, and Melville were declared surplus by the Navy. These sites are available for redevelopment principally through the R.I. Port Authority. Some of the port facilities in these areas are in disrepair, and will require major infusions of capital if they are to be reused, while others are in good condition and are in active use for shipbuilding and other water-dependent purposes. These facilities, when combined with the derelict waterfront in the Providence River, give the state a large inventory of unutilized or underutilized port facilities.

3. Rhode Island supports a thriving offshore commercial fishing industry based at the ports of Galilee and Newport. Galilee is homeport to some 160 vessels, which landed 56 million pounds of fish and shellfish worth \$11.7 million in 1982. The port facilities at Galilee are owned by the state and managed by the Department of Environmental Management. A large portion of the 21 million pounds of fish and shellfish worth \$13 million (1979) landed at Newport is caught by vessels that have home ports out of state. Fishing vessels berthing at Newport utilize facilities managed under lease by the Department of Environmental Management. Rhode Island's commercial fishing fleets are growing but are severely hampered by limited berthing and unloading facilities. An expansion and improvement program of the state facilities at Galilee and Newport has been underway for a decade.

4. Nearly all Rhode Island's boating and shipping facilities require periodic dredging to maintain adequate water depths in channels and turning basins and at berths. Until the mid-sixties, dredge spoils were disposed with little concern for environmental impacts. Salt marshes were filled, new sandbars and spits created, and the largest project in recent history, the deepening of the Providence channel from 30 to 40 feet, left a large spoil mound off Brenton Reef in the Sound and a legacy of vehement opposition by fishing interests to any offshore disposal. For the past two decades, finding acceptable solutions to dredged materials disposal needs has proved difficult. Salt marsh building, bulkheading, and beach nourishment are frequently viable solutions where small volumes are concerned, but offshore dumping may be the only cost-effective solution for large projects. All solutions raise concerns, and energetic opposition is frequently organized. Finding acceptable,

environmentally sound solutions to dredged materials disposal remains an important challenge for the coastal program.

C. Policies

1. The Council's goals for Type 6 waters and adjacent lands under Council jurisdiction are to encourage and support modernization and increased commercial activity related to shipping and commercial fisheries.

2. Highest priority uses of Type 6 waters and adjacent lands under Council jurisdiction are: (a) berthing, loading and unloading, and servicing of commercial vessels; (b) construction and maintenance of port facilities, navigation channels, and berths; and (c) construction and maintenance of facilities required for the support of commercial shipping and fishing activities.

The Council shall prohibit activities that substantially detract from or interfere with these priority uses.

3. The Council will encourage and support port development and modernization and increased economic activity in the marine industries by participating wherever possible in the joint long-range planning and development activities with other state and local agencies, including the R.I. Port Authority, the Department of Environmental Management, and coastal cities and towns.

4. Through its Special Area Management Plan for Providence Harbor, and other planning initiatives, the Council will identify and designate acceptable disposal solutions and sites adequate to meet the need for dredging, and provide the assurances required by industry that channel depths will be maintained, while minimizing environmental effects. The solutions may be more costly than older disposal practices, and may involve innovative technology. The Council will also work in cooperation with the Cities of Providence and East Providence and the Corps of Engineers toward achieving the removal of dilapidated piers and abandoned barges, which presently preclude economic use of large areas within Providence Harbor.